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Environment Committee

March 2, 2009

Testimony of Martin Mador

In Support of

HB 6572 An Act Concerning Banning Bisphenol-A in Children's Products and Food Products
and Prohibiting Certain Alternative Substances

SB 919 An Act Phasing out the Use of Polybrominated Diphenyl Ethers

SB 792 An Act Prohibiting the Idling of Motor Vehicles

In Partial Support of

SB 1020 An Act Concerning Pesticide Applications at Child Day Care Centers and Schools

I am Martin Mador, 130 Highland Ave., Hamden, CT 06518. I am the Legislative and Political Chair of the Connecticut Sierra Club, and am here today representing our 10,000 Connecticut members concerned about the health of our environment, our economic well-being, and the quality of life in Connecticut. I possess a Master's of Environmental Management degree from Yale.

Sierra considers the intentional introduction of toxics into our environment an important environmental issue. Industry over the past century has marketed products with scant regard for their effects. To protect our health, we must move to the "precautionary principle", which requires discontinuance once significant evidence of harm has accumulated. It is the duty and obligation of government to exercise effective oversight.

It would be appropriate to regulate toxic products at the federal level. Unfortunately, the federal government has clearly not upheld its duty to do so, particularly in the past eight years. Therefore, the state must step up to provide these necessary protections.

SB 6572 concerns bisphenol-A (BPA). BPA is used as a plastics hardener, as a liner in most metal food cans, and a component in microwaveable containers. BPA can leach out of these materials, especially when heat is applied. It is estimated that over 90% of Americans now carry it in our body tissue. It is implicated in a wide range of disease, including infertility, obesity, breast and prostate cancer, diabetes, thyroid malfunction, birth defects, and neurological disorders. Sierra considers 6572 a priority bill for this session.

SB 919 concerns polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE) added as flame retardants in bedding, clothing, electronics, and plastics. They are implicated in cancer, birth defects, thyroid disruption, hearing deficits, learning disorders such as ADHD, and mental retardation. While they may retard combustion, they become extremely toxic once they start burning. There are alternatives available now. 919 is an appropriate and well-crafted bill which would restrict the sale and use of these flame retardants.

SB 1020 extends the ban on pesticide applications on school grounds to day care centers. As younger children are the most susceptible to these toxins, it is imperative that we protect them as we now do for children in grades eight and below.

However, Sierra is UNCONDITIONALLY opposed to yet another year's delay in the application of these restrictions to school grounds. We see no reason of any sort to grant this unnecessary extension to 2010, and urge the committee to protect the health of our younger school children by striking the change to the effective date in Section 10-231b (b).

SB 792 extends the prohibition on extended motor vehicle idling from a DEP infraction to a state infraction, enforceable not only by DEP conservation officers, but municipal police. Its purpose is to act as a deterrent to extended idling, which results in the unnecessary release of incomplete combustion products and global warming gases. Except in severe weather or other exceptional cases, there is no need for it, so it is appropriate for the legislature to take action. However, we are concerned that this may be used by the police for selective prosecution, or harassment. We would like to see language added to the bill to discourage that.